Fowl Feathered Review

No. 178

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Issue № 178: There's no reason a hula hoop can't also be a circus ring.

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

Return Policy:
If this magazine does not meet your expectations,
please return it to us in its original condition
for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded) To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it’s more likely a testament to the local takeout joint’s generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)
3. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
4. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.
5. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
6. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers (pw.org)

"Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid

Just a Girl

By HD Normandy

You're looking at the wrong--no, not the guy with the ferret. He's very rude. The ferret I mean. Over by the river. Keep tracking the girl. Okay, in 3-2-1.

Her honey mustard metallic cornrows, a shimmering testament to a Tuesday afternoon audacity, caught the Providence sunlight like a thousand tiny rebellious disco balls. Ash, astride her e-bike—a low hum of electric defiance beneath her—was a fleeting spectacle. The LED nails, miniature galaxies clinging to her fingertips, pulsed with a playlist that dared to fuse the saccharine rush of pop with the gritty soul of funk, punctuated by the occasional, almost philosophical, cataclysm of a meow-mix interlude. Passersby, steeped in the mundane rhythm of their Rhode Island day, squinted, their realities momentarily fractured by this human comet streaking past.

Meanwhile, in the sterile embrace of her new apartment—a monument to modern living where the gleam felt suspiciously like a veneer—a phantom limb of the past lay dormant. A box. Cardboard, dusty with the accumulated sighs of thirty-six years. Powdered milk. Vintage 1989. It squatted in the cupboard, a silent, beige heckler, its presence a low-grade hum of breakfasts gone awry, of omelets that whispered of existential dread. Who, in the grand theater of domesticity, tucked powdered milk into a cupboard? And why, oh why, did it linger still?

The Providence River, a ribbon of liquid history unspooling beside her, mirrored the turbulence within. Toss it? A decisive severing from the spectral tendrils of yesteryear? Or a cowardly surrender to the relentless march of time, an admission that some relics belonged only to the hushed halls of memory? The sheer absurdity of this internal debate settled upon her, a weightless yet profound melancholy, like the dregs of forgotten hot chocolate.

Steam billowed from a phalanx of food trucks, each a tiny culinary universe emitting fragrant signals of sesame and spice. In this aromatic haze, a fantastical notion bloomed: the powdered milk, suddenly animate. Eyes snapping open, a papery voice rising in protest. “I’m here for a reason!” it would declare, its dusty cardboard quivering with indignation. “I once lent my powdery essence to a perfectly respectable bowl of cereal!”

A seagull, a feathered bandit with larceny in its beady gaze, swooped with clumsy ambition at a vendor’s discarded fry. Its beak, a frantic paintbrush, slashed at the air in a chaotic masterpiece of missed opportunity. Ash, a sudden, sharp bark of laughter escaping her lips, felt a kinship with this avian buffoonery. This was it. This improbable intersection of e-bikes, expired dairy, and aggressively hungry seabirds, all unfolding against the dreamlike canvas of Rhode Island.

Following the river’s meandering path, she conjured a protest. A throng of forgotten foodstuffs, their expiration dates held aloft like defiant banners. “We are not mere remnants!” their collective, slightly musty voices would chant. “We too have the ghost of flavor! The phantom of creaminess!” In her mind’s eye, her LED nails transformed, each tiny light morphing into a flashing neon sign: “Dare to Be Dairy!”

The charm of Providence, usually a comforting tapestry of brick and brine, seemed to unravel, each cobblestone and historic facade stitched together by a surrealist with a penchant for the delightfully unhinged. This delicious absurdity fueled her pedaling, each slight wobble of her bike a line of hilariously poignant poetry etched against the urban landscape.

Yet, beneath the shimmering surface of this whimsical escapade, a question persisted, a tiny burr of philosophical inquiry. What, indeed, did one do with the things that had outlived their purpose? This simple curiosity, this nagging little what-if, tethered her to that dusty box. Not with tenderness, not with nostalgia, but with a shared embrace of the magnificently bizarre. And who, in the carefully curated gallery of their life, could truly resist the allure of a little glorious madness?

With a decisive flick of her wrist, Ash veered her e-bike toward the looming maw of the nearest dumpster. The powdered milk box, still untouched by the dust motes of her contemplation, seemed to emit a silent, papery plea: “Don’t you dare!” But dare she did. A triumphant arc, a soft thud against the metal, and the past, in its powdered form, was relegated to the realm of refuse. A giggle, light and airy as dandelion fluff, escaped her as she pedaled away, the rhythm of the moment her only guide. The river, a silent confidante, shimmered in complicity.

Constellation, 1966, Color Lithograph

By Portland Lang

Ash stood at the edge of the Providence River, her blonde cornrows fraying like the edges of a half-finished sketch. The air smelled of smeeths cardboard informative and burnt espresso, a scent that clung to her apron from another life—dental school, she thought, a box of false teeth and existential dread. Her friends at RISD had long since abandoned their brushes for wine, but Ash lingered, drawn to the chaos of the art school's cacolets and the way the sunlight fractured through the stained glass like spadiceous hymns.

She'd come to visit, but also to flee. The dentistry program had become a cataclysm of brine and gritty emit, each root canal a sylloges of failure. I need to change majors, she told herself, but the words dissolved like powdered narrative in her mouth. Instead, she wandered the halls of the art school, where the walls breathed with hedonically saccharine colors, and her mind swam with images of Helen Gerardia—a ghostly figure who painted the sky as if it were a rushlight line, flickering between 1989 and now.

One afternoon, as Ash sketched the onychias of a rusted bridge, the sky unfurled. It wasn't sky, really, but a lithograph—a print of her thoughts, spilled onto the clouds. Helen was there, her hands stained with cardboard and dusty queen pigment, rearranging the elution of stars into a trebuchet of light. Ash reached out, and the sky smeeths into her palms, a cobbled map of sweir possibilities.

She didn't return to dental school. Instead, she bought a buzzkiller of coffee and sat beneath the sonnetizes of the River, where the mokopuna of her old textbooks floated like deprecative laagers. This, she thought, is the real operation.
And the sky, ever the saccharine liar, kept printing itself in beige and crystallising dread, a testament to the girl who chose art over alloy.

Eternal Flame

By Cecilia Maher

The Toyota Celica, a mobile command center for consumer feedback and sibling negotiations, idled under the burgeoning warmth of a Providence morning. Sunlight, fractured by the city's nascent activity, dappled the dashboard on South Main Street. Inside, Demi, a meticulous chronicler of corporate taste, diligently recorded her sister Ash's visceral reactions to the bottled enigma that was the Hostess Twinkie Iced Latte. The air, thick with the promise of a humid Rhode Island day, carried the cloying sweetness of the beverage, a scent that clung to the upholstery like a persistent memory.

"So," Demi began, her pen a poised instrument above a notepad resting on her knee, "initial sensory data on the Twinkie Latte? Unfiltered honesty, please, Ash." Her gaze, a delicate balance of sisterly concern and professional detachment, rested on Ash, who cautiously navigated her first sip. A faint dusting of powdered sugar, a ghostly imprint of the iconic treat, adorned Ash's upper lip, catching the weak, urban sunlight.

Ash's face, a fleeting canvas of skepticism and reluctant recognition, settled into a mild contortion before she swallowed. "It tastes... precisely like a Twinkie. Alarmingly so. Sweet to an almost confrontational degree. Artificial, undeniably, yet imbued with this strange, almost unsettling... nostalgia, you comprehend?" A fleeting image of childhood birthday parties, frosted with sugary excess, flickered across her consciousness.

Demi's pen danced across the lined paper, transcribing the ephemeral nuances of Ash's experience. "Nostalgic artificiality. A compelling paradox. And the textural elements?"

"Thin. Unexpectedly, disconcertingly thin. Like... coffee that has merely brushed against a cloud of sweetened air. The 'iced latte' designation feels... aspirational, at best. It's closer to the spectral essence of a latte suspended in sugary milk." Ash took another

tentative sip, her eyes narrowing in analytical contemplation. "The lingering sensation, however... that's pure Twinkie. That ephemeral buttery whisper, that almost hallucinatory vanilla note that persists like a half-forgotten melody."

"Understood," Demi murmured, her brow furrowed in focused concentration as she captured Ash's sensory landscape in precise script. "Sweetness quantification – on a scale of one to ten, where ten represents the theoretical ideal of 'direct crystalline sucrose ingestion'?"

Ash paused, the syrupy weight of the liquid a tangible presence on her tongue. "A solid eight. Perhaps even venturing into the territory of eight-point-five. It's... a commitment to sweetness."

"Duly noted. Now, envision this product in its natural habitat, amidst the cacophony of a convenience store's refrigerated display. What siren call would lure your hand towards it?" Demi's gaze sharpened, probing the depths of Ash's consumer psyche.

A sigh, carrying the weight of unspoken artistic yearnings, escaped Ash's lips. Her fingers fidgeted with the garish label. "Frankly? The sheer novelty. The audacity of the concept is... almost compelling in its strangeness. But I harbor serious doubts regarding its long-term allure."

Demi nodded slowly, absorbing the layers of Ash's response. "And what deterrents would prevent a subsequent purchase?"

"The overwhelming sweetness, without question. And the disconcerting lack of substance. It fails to inhabit the realm of a genuine latte experience. It's a fleeting sugar rush masquerading as a beverage. Furthermore," Ash's voice lowered, the undercurrent of her internal conflict coloring her tone, "I am endeavoring to... recalibrate my relationship with excessive sweetness. With... all forms of excess, perhaps."

Demi's pen stilled, the unarticulated weight of Ash's deeper anxieties hanging in the humid air. She turned to her sister, her kind eyes reflecting a profound empathy. "All

forms, you say? Does this encompass... the structured curriculum of the CCRI dental assistant program?"

Ash's shoulders slumped, a silent acknowledgment of the looming confrontation. "Demi, please. Not this now."

"My intention is not to instigate conflict," Demi replied gently, placing the notepad on the dashboard with a soft click. "However, your recent demeanor has been... uncharacteristically unfocused. Your narratives of Dr. Henderson's pedagogical pronouncements have fallen into an unusual silence. A significant deviation from your typical discourse."

Ash's gaze drifted, seeking solace in the mundane reality outside the window – the relentless flow of urban traffic, the anonymous facades of brick buildings. "It's simply... not the anticipated trajectory. The endless charting, the sterile rituals of sterilization... they feel... constricting. And, if I am to be entirely truthful, profoundly devoid of inspiration."

"Yet, it represents a tangible pathway, Ash. A vocation offering stability. And you possess the inherent qualities – the deep well of empathy, the unwavering patience – to excel within that framework."

"But I harbor no intrinsic desire for such excellence, Demi! My hands yearn for a different kind of engagement, for the tactile intimacy of creation, the vibrant language of color, the transformative power of form. That is the impetus behind... my application to RISD." The words tumbled out, a torrent of long-suppressed artistic yearning and barely concealed anxiety.

Demi's expression remained a study in calm contemplation. "RISD. A significant divergence from your current path. We traversed this territory previously, recall? The formidable financial implications, the intensely competitive admissions process..."

"I received an acceptance, Demi!" Ash's voice, a fragile vessel carrying both elation and trepidation, filled the small car. "The notification arrived last week. I... I hesitated to share the news, anticipating your... reasoned counterarguments."

Demi inhaled deeply, a slow, deliberate act of centering. "Ash, my dear, my intention is never to impede your pursuit of genuine fulfillment. However, you stand at the midpoint of a structured academic program, a considerable investment of both your time and financial resources. What of that commitment?"

"It feels increasingly like a protracted exercise in futility!" Ash's voice rose, the edges fraying with a raw urgency. "Each passing day feels like a further alienation from my authentic trajectory."

Demi reached across the cluttered console, her hand finding Ash's arm in a gesture of grounding warmth. "Okay, okay. I perceive the intensity of your feelings. But this... abrupt severing of ties? Without even completing the current academic year? What necessitates such immediate action?"

Ash turned to her sister, the sharpness of her earlier agitation softening under the unwavering steadiness of Demi's gaze. "Because every moment spent navigating the intricacies of dental hygiene is a moment stolen from the vibrant possibilities of RISD. A day where my creative spirit languishes, unexpressed."

A profound silence descended, punctuated only by the low hum of traffic and the unexpected, tinny strains of music emanating from the adjacent vehicle. A slightly battered Honda Civic, radiating an aura of youthful rebellion, pulsed with an incongruous melody. A young man within, all tousled hair and faded band t-shirt, was singing along with fervent, if spectacularly off-key, passion to "Eternal Flame" by The Bangles. His earnest, tuneless rendition, a bizarre counterpoint to the intensity of their conversation, was both jarring and strangely endearing.

"What if..." Demi began, her voice a gentle counterpoint to the Honda's off-key serenade, "what if we explored a more... nuanced approach? What if you completed this academic

year at CCRI? You are so near the culmination. You would possess a tangible credential, a safety net, a sturdy foundation should... should the path at RISD present unforeseen complexities. And then, in the autumn, you could immerse yourself fully in the RISD experience, unburdened by a sense of incompletion."

Ash's brow furrowed, the pragmatic logic of Demi's suggestion clashing with the fierce urgency of her artistic aspirations. "That feels akin to... an unnecessary postponement of my very existence."

"It is not postponement, but rather, the construction of a more resilient foundation," Demi countered softly. "It is demonstrating to yourself your capacity for commitment and completion. It is equipping yourself with a valuable skill set, even if its direct application remains uncertain. And it is embarking on your RISD journey with the clarity of knowing you did not simply abandon an endeavor without thoughtful consideration."

Ash chewed on her lip, the internal debate a palpable tension in the confined space. The prospect of six more months immersed in the clinical world of dentistry felt like an anchor dragging her down, yet the undeniable wisdom in Demi's words resonated with a deep-seated understanding of her sister's practical nature.

"And the financial implications?" Ash asked, her voice barely a whisper. "RISD's tuition... it presents a formidable obstacle."

"We will navigate that terrain," Demi affirmed, her voice imbued with unwavering resolve. "We always have. Perhaps I can dedicate myself to securing additional focus group opportunities. The corporate world harbors an insatiable appetite for nuanced consumer insights regarding limited-edition snack food innovations." A small, encouraging smile touched her lips. "Just... consider this proposition, Ash. Complete this chapter. Demonstrate your resilience. And then, unleash the extraordinary artist I know resides within you."

Ash's gaze drifted from the half-empty bottle of artificially flavored latte to her sister's earnest face. Demi's unwavering support, her blend of gentle understanding and

pragmatic wisdom, had always been a constant in the fluctuating currents of Ash's life. Perhaps... perhaps this more measured approach held a wisdom she was too eager to overlook.

"Six more months," Ash conceded, the words carrying a weight of resignation, yet tinged with a nascent acceptance. "And then... RISD. No backward glances?"

Demi's hand tightened around Ash's. "Then RISD. No backward glances. That is my unwavering commitment." She hesitated for a moment, her expression softening further. "You know, honey... and please do not misinterpret my intention... but remember Mom?"

Ash's brow furrowed slightly. "Mom? What about her?"

"Well," Demi continued gently, her gaze steady, "Mom was... a wanderer. A self-proclaimed free spirit. Remember her abrupt departure from the program at Eastern Maine Community College to pursue a career as a rodeo clown? That endeavor lasted approximately six months before the inherent risks of bull riding proved... problematic."

Ash nodded slowly, a faint smile gracing her lips at the memory of their mother's fleeting passions.

"And then," Demi went on, her tone still soft, "her subsequent 'cutting and running' from our lives, in pursuit of some nebulous self-discovery, correct? Which ultimately culminated in a back injury sustained during the late shift at a Whataburger in Amarillo. Not quite the glamorous odyssey she had envisioned."

Ash's smile faded slightly. She understood the trajectory of Demi's narrative.

"My intention is not to cast aspersions on Mom's memory," Demi clarified quickly, her eyes filled with understanding. "But sometimes, that powerful urge to abandon one's current reality and chase an ephemeral dream... it can yield unforeseen consequences. Mom possessed her own unique brilliance and creativity, but her impulsive nature occasionally... left us to manage the ensuing complexities."

Demi reached out, her hand gently encompassing Ash's. "Completing this year, obtaining that certificate... it is not about stifling your artistic aspirations, Ash. It is about establishing a safety net. It is about demonstrating to yourself your capacity for commitment and completion, even within a domain that does not fully ignite your passions. It is about consciously choosing not to repeat patterns that... well, that did not always yield optimal outcomes for Mom."

Ash looked down at their intertwined hands, her expression pensive. She recognized the genuine concern underlying Demi's words, devoid of judgment, simply grounded in lived experience.

"I understand," Ash said quietly. "You don't want me to make an impetuous decision I might later regret."

"Precisely," Demi affirmed, giving Ash's hand a gentle squeeze. "RISD is not a fleeting mirage. It will be there in the autumn. And you will arrive there too, Ash. Let us simply navigate a slightly more considered course, agreed?"

Ash sighed, the tension in her shoulders easing incrementally. "Agreed. Six more months. And then, I am exchanging dental implements for artistic tools."

Demi's smile was genuine, radiating relief. "That sounds like a judicious plan." She retrieved her notepad, her professional demeanor reasserting itself. "Now," she continued, her pen poised, "regarding this Twinkie-inspired beverage... any lingering gustatory impressions?"

A faint smile touched Ash's lips, a fragile bloom of hope amidst the lingering sweetness. "Perhaps a faint echo of regret. But ultimately, it served as the catalyst for a much-needed... recalibration." As Demi prepared to pose her final consumer feedback question, Ash's mind, unbidden, conjured a series of surreal vignettes.

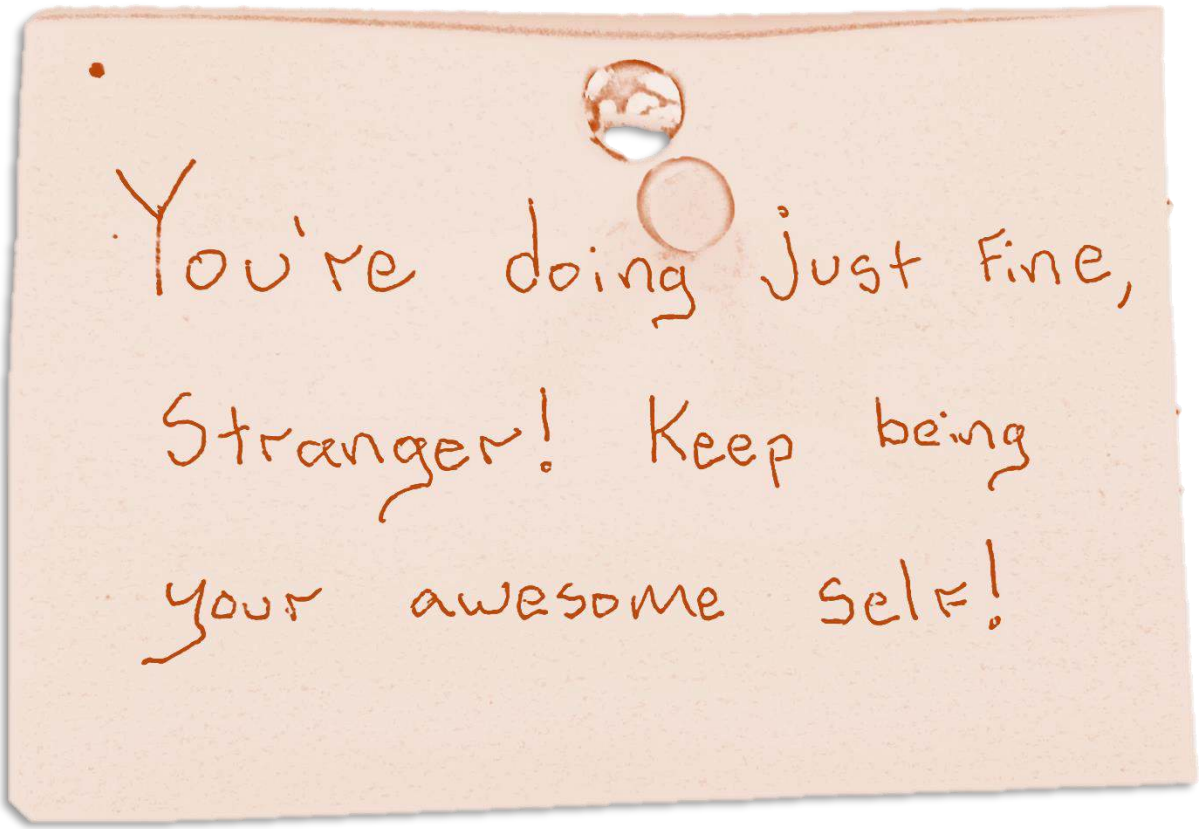
First, the Twinkie stood resplendent on a gleaming podium, bathed in an almost celestial glow. Clad in a miniature, impeccably tailored suit, it held aloft platters overflowing with

comically oversized, vibrant produce – ruby red strawberries, emerald-green broccoli, sunshine yellow bell peppers. Tiny, diverse children, their faces alight with innocent joy, reached out to accept these healthy offerings from the unlikely leader of the free world.

The scene dissolved, replaced by the dusty expanse of a small-town rodeo arena. The familiar golden oblong now sported a miniature, brightly colored ruffled collar and a painted smile that stretched improbably wide. This Twinkie rodeo clown, defying its lack of limbs, exuded a Chaplinesque energy, comically tripping over its nonexistent feet, narrowly escaping the playful nudges of equally diminutive bulls. Tiny puffs of flour erupted with each exaggerated stumble, met by the imagined peals of laughter from an unseen audience.

The rodeo faded into a stark, monochrome landscape. A lone railroad track stretched into a hazy horizon. By a small, crackling fire sat a weary Twinkie hobo, its golden exterior smudged with soot. A tiny bindle, tied to a miniature stick, lay beside it, a testament to journeys undertaken. Despite its apparent hardship, a quiet dignity emanated from the little cake. As Ash watched in her mind's eye, a single, perfectly formed raindrop fell from a grey sky, landing squarely on the Twinkie's golden crown.

The fleeting, absurd imagery brought a small, involuntary smile to Ash's lips. The sheer whimsicality of it all offered a momentary respite from the weight of her decision. Even the humble Twinkie, it seemed, could embody a multitude of unexpected roles. Perhaps her own path, she mused, didn't need to be so rigidly defined. The six months at CCRI, while not her chosen stage, might yet yield their own unexpected lessons, their own strange, perhaps even slightly absurd, wisdom. The off-key strains of "Eternal Flame" continued their earnest, slightly painful serenade from the adjacent Honda, a bizarrely fitting soundtrack to the unfolding drama within the cluttered sanctuary of Demi's Celica.


You're doing just fine,
Stranger! Keep being
your awesome self!

PULSE AND PEACE
&
JUST FEELING AROUND

By Edward Mycue

From many angles, points of viewing, the rainbow is there.
I always try to be a glass carnation of perceptions.
My niece Victoria says changing cannot be forced.
You have to be realistic about what you are seeing
trying to accept and understand even when not agreeing.

What makes all the colors in rainbows? I don't live in the past.
The past lives on in me, many ways of seeing, many me's.
I live in the now, but who am I? Stories, some, get highlighted.
I have to become realistic about what I am seeing.
Living now, who am I who am influenced by these stories.

From each viewing step, something is highlighted. And angle.
Some things are obscured when we focus elsewhere.
When what is love is damaged there can be anger, eruptions.
I am influenced by other people' stories as other peoples do.
Others combine, collide, ally, curdle, become crazed in me.

You have to be realistic about what you are seeing, she says,
trying to accept and understand even when not agreeing.
I'd asked if peace was possible, not "were" it possible.
I asked where's a pulse for peace fearing there was none.
Eva and AI, dear friends, said peace and she wrote "pulse"—

Peace is hard to find and you have to keep feeling around,
gently. Then feel some more. Never give up on the double P.
Victoria, dear niece, says be realistic about your seeing,
trying accepting, understanding even when not agreeing.
Peace is hard to find and you have to keep feeling around.

Honey

By Carol Tanner

The Xeorox hum of HR, a sterile mantra,
a beatnik breath gargling corporate coffee,
while outside, the spectral pines of Carolina weep resin and humid dread,
and the air conditioning whispers like Bishop's lost continents.

He sits, a supplicant before the laminated desk,
a nervous tic fluttering beneath his left eye,
the interviewer, a drone in sensible shoes,
asking about "teamwork" and "problem-solving,"
while the Duchess jumbo iced honey bun, a phantom limb, aches in his soul.

Pineville, Pineville, O heart of frosted yearning!

"So, tell me about a time you showed initiative,"
the drone's voice, a flat Piedmont drawl.
He sees himself knee-deep in a sugary swamp,
wrestling a rogue conveyor belt, a metallic anaconda,
each twist and turn a desperate embrace of the golden prize.

His chosen poet, whispering in the static of the fluorescent tubes,
"The world is charged with the grandeur of buns,"
a sprung rhythm colliding with a holy howl.

"Initiative?" he croaks, throat thick with unshed frosting,
"I see a bun in need, a bun astray, and my soul leaps!"
The drone blinks, a digital reset.

Pineville, Pineville, where the glaze is always noon!

He gets the job. A miracle greased with desperation.
The training begins, a Kafkaesque ballet of safety protocols and sanitation charts.
He learns the language of the machines, the clanking dialect of devotion.
The trainer, a woman with hairnetted resignation, points to the buttons,
"This is 'seal,' this is 'eject,' this is where the magic happens."

He sees not mere mechanics, but the sacred birthing ritual,
each wrapped bun a tiny golden Miss North Carolina emerging from the steel womb.
He touches the cellophane, a communion wafer.

Pineville, Pineville, your sweetness stains my dreams!

The Ramsay Mechanical assessment, a forgotten terror,
replaced by the daily sacrament of the production line.
He stands before the endless parade of his beloveds,
a symphony of sugary sighs on the conveyor belt.

He learns to troubleshoot the fickle machinery,
a jammed sealer, a misaligned wrapper, each a crisis of faith.
He dreams of oiling the gears with melted frosting,
of rewiring circuits with spun sugar.

Pineville, Pineville, my grease-stained fingers pray!

The night shift descends, a humid Carolina nocturne.
The factory floor hums with a primal energy.
He is one with the machines, a cog in the confectionery cosmos.
The scent of warm dough and honeyed glaze, an intoxicating incense.

He sees the imperfections, the slightly askew frosting swirl,
each a unique beauty mark on the face of his obsession.
He handles them with reverence, a curator of edible ecstasy.

Pineville, Pineville, your twelve-hour shifts are bliss!

He is no longer just a man. He is a guardian of the golden hoard.
His purpose distilled to the perfect packaging of the perfect bun.
America, a vast hungry maw, now focused on this single, sweet point.
A higher power, manifest in the sticky perfection.

Pineville, Pineville, my soul is cellophane-wrapped!

He is home. He is among them.
The live of his life, whirring past on the endless belt.
And in the quiet hum of the machinery, he hears a whispered blessing:
Duchess.
Jumbo.
Iced.
Honey.
Bun.

Sing It, Chickens!

By Constance Rosalie

Azure field, where chanticleers ascend,
Or beaks agleam, with gules their wattles blend.
Argent their spurs, a proud and noble sight,
Sable their gaze, fixed on the starry height.
Each plume a gem, in heraldic display,
They strive for heavens, at the break of day.

2 Poems by Lui Barufel

Betwixt a Dredge and Epiphysis

laying the groundwork for some improvisational jazz to accompany a Sunday lunch which will consist of pulling every container out of the fridge and smelling the contents to see what's still edible.
a parish is 20 airlocks.
ancillary exploration designed to detect changes in reward distribution. like, how to maximize the chances that you will win enough Rice-a-Roni to match the number of nonstick pans you have by whispering lies to the other players about Dean Koontz.
apprentice butterfat visionary.
there's a guy in Arkansas who, when he rides down the highway, wishes there were machetes sticking out the side of his sedan to mow down the tall grass, a clean drop.
he listens to 92.9 KVRE.
nanobots willing to fall for any old okeydoke.
Nevadan neonates with hill climbing ability and an instinctive sense of vendetta.
had Napoleon lived long enough to become roly poly. he could have first become a veejay then later hawked Beano.
picking up on what the list of possible side effects is trying to say.
my distracting inability to name shit that Gary Oldman has been in.
there's a girl in Texas who smells her feet and figures she needs a second opinion.
sunshine hardliners.
mistakenly rehabilitated.
probative nonsense

More Time Spent in Traffic Straining to See the Horizon

caveats which come with vaulting ceilings over a steaming deuce.
as told to television personality Ronnie Potts.
device induced injuries.
clammy after snacking.
divergent nonsense mediated decay machinery is inefficient.
the week decency became a chancy niche.
what if GMO cucumbers start dreaming? what do we do then?
scholarship which tends to indicate that 2 Nephi 28 was written while riding horseback.
the appearance of fluffy shoes in so many of today's “recipes for success”.
childish thoughts in adult sizes.
palliative hair pulling associated with finding out Robbie the Robot was a registered Republican.
resembling nothing so much as a furniture scholar.
ineffective freethinker.
Cochlea of Jugoslavia performing their hit single "I Saw Your Mother and She Had No Spumoni".
everyday eyeball.
putting more Fabians on verandas in Dayton.
attempts to alleviate the scourge of osteoporosis thru the introduction of the Charleston and large cheese pizzas.
Eden was a place without a Stuyvesant or rhododendrons, a place without the knowledge of the shame of the spelling bee. by percentage, more people leave a spelling contest feeling shame than ever do a whorehouse or opium den.

F 18

Ana Julia Guido

Poema de Guillermo Bowie

Encontrarse al lado de otras obras
No es necesariamente algo automático
Caminar el pasillo entre estancias de libros
Para encontrarse a si mismo
Un privilegio hizo por alguien
A propósito
Por alguien listo en coseguir materiales
Para el alumno, una decisión de notable democracia
En la biblioteca de la universidad de portland state
Se encuentra en el pasillo de libros
Libros en español llevando nombres
De Ernesto Cardenal, Carlos Fuentes, Jose María Arguedas, Mario Benedeti
Y no es consecuencia automática
Estar calibrado al lado de Angel Rama
De Jorge Rufineli De Hernán Vidal
Qué forma de pasar los años cuarentas membrete entre distinguidos

Ana Julia Guido

By Guillermo Bowie

To find oneself next to other works
Isn't something necessarily automatic
To walk the aisle between bookshelves
And find one's self
Is a priviledge made by someone
Purposefully
By someone prepared to acquire materials
For the student, a notably democratic decision
In the library of Portland State University
One finds in the aisles
Books in Spanish carrying names
Such as Ernesto Cardenal, Carlos Fuentes, Jose Maria Arguedas, Mario Benedetti
And It's not an automatic consequence
To be calibrated beside Angel Rama
Jorge Rufinelli, Hernan Vidal
What a way to pass the forties membered between the distinguished.

10
9
1
8
2
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3
6
4
5

Time's Aftertaste

By Alberte Nicole

Ah, yes, the echo of a bygone system,
French decimal time, a ghost of reason
ticking in the sugary maw of gumball generals.
Each candy shell, a bright, fleeting decree.

Gummy sharks, those cartilaginous absurdities,
swim through the syrup of our recollections,
predators of a fabricated ocean.
Innocence, a flavor leached, a phantom limb.

The clock face fractured, not into neat tenths,
but splinters of what was measured,
a revolution digested, now a sweet, synthetic residue.
We chew on the past, a sticky, improbable fauna.

The generals, their sugary ranks dissolving,
command no armies now, only the lingering sweetness
on the tongue, a phantom authority.
And the sharks, voiceless hunters in the candied deep,
remind us of appetites we barely understood.

This innocence, this half-remembered shore,
is it the taste of the shark's first bite?
Or the moment the decimal fractured,
leaving us with these uneven, indigestible fragments?

Janoszanka, Michalina (1889–1952).[1] *Spring*. Before 1926. Tempera painting on clear glass and wood. Height: 48.5 cm, width: 53 cm.[2] The National Museum in Krakow, Krakow, Poland. MNK IV-Mal-326.

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